

A Chronology of Sino–Sasanian Political Relations (455–710) Built Directly from Chinese Primary-Source Quotations¹

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Introduction

The main objective of this work is to provide a basic research aid for studying the political relations between China and the Sasanian Empire of Iran from 455 to 710. An annotated chronology, built directly from Chinese primary-source quotations in both the original and English translation, forms the main component of this work. The history of Sino–Sasanian political relations is known mainly through scattered accounts in about seven or eight primary sources, mostly histories commissioned by several different Chinese imperial courts. (The extant

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native Sasanian writings offer little in the history genre, being composed mainly of religious texts, so we are faced with an imbalance of sources.) The Chinese sources have varying degrees of overlap, and no single source contains an overview of Sino–Sasanian relations. Yet researching any historical topic first requires an overview of that history according to the primary sources.² This particular topic sits at the meeting point of Sasanian history and early-mid imperial Chinese history, two fields that otherwise are rather distant. Understandably, learning literary Chinese is not a common requirement for historians of the Sasanians, nor is learning Middle Persian for historians of early-mid imperial China. I myself am illiterate in Middle Persian, and it is with this problem of language barriers in mind that I construct the chronology out of primary-source quotations with translations. This way, the chronology presents events not so much as facts according to me, but as what the primary sources tell, in anticipation of further research and analyses.

While my translations cannot substitute for the original texts, they are intended as the next best thing for non-Sinologist researchers. To maximally balance literal and idiomatic translation, words and elements of words in translation that correspond to words in the original text are placed in bold. What is not in bold constitutes idiomatic translation. Bracketed words in the translation are ones not in the original text and also not justifiable as idiomatic translation, but are implied and will aid in clarity. Words in parentheses in the translation are similarly not in the original text and are intended to do the following: 1. briefly explain certain words in plainer English, 2. restore lost context, 3. give the literal meaning of words that needed to be translated idiomatically but lost important subtle meaning due to the idiomatic translation, or 4. indicate ambiguities due to Chinese grammar. Literary Chinese is a particularly

²An overview of Sino–Sasanian relations has been done in Abbas Tashakori, “Iran in Chinese Dynastic Histories: A Study of Iran’s Relations with China Prior to the Arab Conquest” (MA thesis, Australian National University, 1974). The thesis also includes translations of the descriptions of Persia in the Chinese primary sources, as well as a “List of the Sāsānian Embassies to China” (47). The list is effectively a concise chronology and ends with the year 648. The chronology in the present article presents the details that can be known about each embassy and ends with the year 710, while also giving more precise dates.

terse language, leaving so much to be inferred from context that any literal translation would invariably produce gibberish. Yet an idiomatic translation alone would (and should) make the researcher hesitant to make in-depth interpretations. For interpretation is heavily dependent on wording, and if certain words in translation are not actually in the original text, any interpretation based on them will likely be unsound. While my translations are bulky and the mix of bold and non-bold letters can be taxing on the eye, I submit that these drawbacks constitute a small sacrifice of reader friendliness in exchange for the maximal breaking of the language barrier. Furthermore, a number of translated terms are explained in annotations, and the remainder of this introduction provides some facts about Chinese history and culture that are relevant for understanding the primary-source passages. The non-Sinologist researcher will likely thereby be prepared to navigate the chronology with less fear of misinterpreting the said passages due to cultural-linguistic misunderstanding.

Background on Chinese History and Culture

In 455, a Sasanian embassy arrived at Píngchéng (平城), capital of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏, [Běi] Wèi), the state that ruled northern China at the time. This is the first known Sino–Sasanian diplomatic contact. The said Wèi state has been referred to by a number of modifiers, including *Northern*, to differentiate it from other historical states named *Wèi*. Such modifiers have, in fact, been applied to most states in the history of China, but they were never part of any official state name (國號, *guóhào*), so in this article, I put such modifiers in brackets. The [Northern] Wèi never ruled southern China. The first known Sasanian embassy to southern China occurred sometime between 13 February 530 and 2 February 531, at which time southern China was ruled by the [Southern] Liáng ([南]梁, [Nán] Liáng) state.

In 534–35, the [Northern] Wèi splintered into rival eastern and western halves, which have been referred to as [Eastern] Wèi ([東]魏, [Dōng] Wèi) and [Western] Wèi ([西]魏, [Xī] Wèi) respectively. The [Eastern] Wèi became the [Northern] Qí ([北]齊, [Běi] Qí) in 550, and the [Western] Wèi became the [Northern] Zhōu ([北]周, [Běi] Zhōu) in

557. Also in 557, the [Southern] Liáng was succeeded by the [Southern] Chén ([南]陳, [Nán] Chén). In all three of these cases, the succession of state occurred when a reigning puppet emperor formally yielded the emperorship to the patrilineal family that had gained de facto supreme power. The [Northern] Zhōu conquered the [Northern] Qí in 577. Then in 581, the [Northern] Zhōu became the Suí (隋), again upon the yielding of emperorship to another patrilineal family. In 589, the Suí went on to conquer the [Southern] Chén, bringing about a unification last seen in the late third century. The Suí was succeeded by the Táng (唐) in 618, and it was during Táng rule that Sasanians began to seek refuge in China or attempt to hold on to an enclave in Central Asia with Chinese backing.³ As the chronology shows, the pre-Táng accounts are fairly repetitive, consisting mainly of diplomatic visits with little to no serious ramifications for either China or Iran. During the Táng period, however, strategy and subtle political posturing became pronounced themes in Sino-Sasanian relations.

All the Chinese states that had relations with the Sasanians regarded non-Chinese states as inferior to themselves. The “state of Persia” (波斯國, *Bōsī guó*), as the Chinese sources refer to the Sasanian Empire, was no exception. Thus, the accounts tell of Sasanian envoys presenting “tribute” (貢, *gòng*) to the Chinese emperors. Moreover, the Sasanian rulers are recognized only as *wáng* (王), the highest title in the Chinese peerage system, but distinctly inferior to the title of the Chinese sovereign, *huángdì* (皇帝, commonly translated as “emperor”). Depending on context, scholars have translated *wáng* as either “king” or “prince”; in this article, I consistently translate the title as “king.” After the Sasanian scion Peroz III sought Táng protection, the Táng invested Peroz, and after Peroz’s death his son Narseh, as *wáng* of Persia. The father and

³Sasanian–Táng relations have been studied by a number of scholars using Chinese sources. Here, I list some relatively recent scholarship in English. These works contain references to older studies of this topic: 1. Matteo Compareti, “The Last Sasanians in China,” *Eurasian Studies*, no. 2 (2003): 197–213; 2. Matteo Compareti, “Chinese-Iranian Relations XV: The Last Sasanians in China,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 2009, iranicaonline.org/articles/china-xv-the-last-sasanians-in-china; and 3. Domenico Agostini and Sören Stark, “Zāwulistān, Kāwulistān and the Land Bosī 波斯: On the Question of a Sasanian Court-in-Exile in the Southern Hindukush,” *Studia Iranica* 45 (2016): 17–38.

son were additionally appointed as officers. (It was not uncommon for Táng peers, including *wángs*, to concurrently serve as civil and military officers.) Understanding the formal political stature that the Sasanian refugees were afforded requires a basic overview of the Táng system of ranks for peerages (爵, *jué*) and officerships (官, *guān*).

The system was as follows: nine ranks (品, *pǐn*), with rank number one being the highest. Each rank was divided into two grades: full (正, *zhèng*) and deputy (從, *zòng*, or *cóng*), with full being higher than deputy. For ranks four through nine, the full and the deputy were each subdivided into upper level (上階, *shàng jiē*) and lower level (下階, *xià jiē*). The system was thus a hierarchy of thirty divisions in total. In this article, when a peerage or officership is mentioned, the rank is given in a footnote. There were three types of officership: 1. sinecure (散, *sǎn*), 2. honorary (勳, *xūn*), and 3. functionary (職事, *zhí shì*), and it was not uncommon for a person to simultaneously hold two or all three types of officership. Of the three, only functionary officerships involved regular, actual administrative duties. For special missions, commissions (差, *chāi*) could be granted, with impromptu titles for the commissionees. The titles of many officers were modified with the words *Left* (左, *zuǒ*) or *Right* (右, *yòu*), and formally, Left had precedence over Right (though this precedence may or may not have translated into higher authority). Peroz III, for example, was appointed General of the Right Martial Guard (右武衛將軍, *yòu wǔ wèi jiāngjūn*). There was also an officership called *General of the Left Martial Guard* (左武衛將軍, *zuǒ wǔ wèi jiāngjūn*); the two officers were of the same rank, but at least in terms of ceremonial precedence, the General of the Left Martial Guard was higher than the General of the Right Martial Guard.

In literary Chinese, the term *shǐ* (使) refers to official messengers in a domestic context as well as diplomats. *Shǐ* also refers to officials commissioned to perform special missions, and hence was often part of the aforementioned impromptu titles. In this article, I translate the term as “emissary” for all contexts.

Also note that Chinese has no grammatical plural, thereby causing ambiguity when there is nothing else from which to infer singular or plural.

The Chinese script is logographic. Its logographic characters are pronounced differently across time and space, but their meanings are uniform. Linguists refer to the Chinese language spoken during Sino–Sasanian political relations as *Middle Chinese* (MC) (中古漢語, *zhōng gǔ Hànyǔ*), a language whose phonology has been reconstructed (but with research ongoing) and transliterated using a variety of romanization systems. My knowledge of Middle Chinese is most superficial, but out of necessity, I attempt to give the Middle Chinese version of certain names.⁴ Amongst historians, modern standard Chinese (Mandarin) phonology is commonly used in reading texts from all premodern eras, including the Middle Chinese era. This helps to facilitate communication amongst historians from across the world, but presents problems for certain tasks. For instance, when foreign names were written in Chinese during the Middle Chinese era, the characters chosen to write the names were selected for best phonetic proximity at the time—that is, best phonetic proximity in Middle Chinese.

In my translations, I aim to minimize the Sinicization of non-Chinese names; for example, I transliterate “居和多” as “Kawad” rather than “Kio-fiu-tò” in Middle Chinese or “Jūhéduō” in Mandarin. Yet there are names of places and polities I was unable to identify, in which case only the Mandarin and Middle Chinese versions are given.

In Chinese, the family name (姓, *xìng*, or 氏, *shì*) precedes the personal name (名, *míng*). For example, in the name “Wáng Míngyuǎn,” “Wáng” is the family name while “Míngyuǎn” is the personal name. Mention of one’s personal name was the prerogative of one’s parents, ruler, and the historian’s pen. The personal name was also for referring to oneself in the third person, which was considered an act of

⁴I follow Prof. Mài Yún’s (麥耘) system, according to information from “中古音、上古音查詢” (“Zhōng gǔ yīn, shàng gǔ yīn cháxún”), 古音小鏡網 (*Gǔ yīn xiǎo jìng wǎng*), www.guolin.com/book_niyin.php (accessed 1 June 2021).

humility. Outside of the aforesaid circumstances, one would not mention someone's personal name, lest disrespect was intended.

Upon death, an emperor would normally receive a posthumous name (諡號, *shihào*, or simply 諡, *shì*), which would be one or more predefined terms deemed as the best assessment of his personal character and reign as a whole. If deemed worthy, he would also be honored in the ancestral temple (太廟, *tàimiào*), whereby he would receive a temple name (廟號, *miàohào*). Temple names end with either “-zǔ” (祖), which denotes emperors regarded as having done meritorious deeds and who were usually state founders, or “-zōng” (宗), which denotes emperors regarded as virtuous and who were usually state inheritors. The temple name would always precede the posthumous name, which in turn would precede and modify the title *huángdì* (emperor). The primary sources refer to all emperors deemed legitimate, including those of distant historical states, by their temple names, posthumous names, or other appellations, and not their personal names.

In the chronology, I indicate the reigning Sasanian and Chinese rulers under which the events took place. The Táng emperors began to have lengthy posthumous names; as the Táng emperors mentioned in the chronology all happened to have temple names, for simplicity I forego indicating their posthumous names altogether (and they are, in fact, best known by their temple names). For all the Chinese rulers, I also give their personal names following the title “emperor,” as they have become commonly used by modern historians.

Premodern China had its own calendar. Moreover, a key symbol of sovereignty was the promulgation of era names (年號, *niánhào*) to mark years. When an emperor had chosen an era name and indicated when the era would begin, the first year of that era would be called the *inaugural year* (元年, *yuán nián*), the following year would be the *second year*, and so on. For example, with “Inaugural Year of Yìfèng” and “Second Year of Yìfèng,” “Yìfèng” is the era name. When an emperor changed the era name, the new era would begin with the “inaugural year” again. To convert Chinese years and dates to the

Gregorian calendar, I rely on the Academia Sinica Center for Digital Culture's online conversion tool.⁵

The Chronology

Unless specified via separate citations, the date of an account and the account itself share the same citation, in which case, to avoid redundancy, only the date is annotated with the citation.

King Yazdegerd II (r. 439–57) (Capital: Ctesiphon⁶)

The Gāozōng Wénchéng (高宗文成) Emperor Tuòbá Jùn (拓跋濬) (r. 452–65) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Píngchéng,⁷ 平城)

25 September 455⁸

The [imperial] **carriage returned** to the **palace** [at Píngchéng].

車架還宮。

Sometime between 27 October and 7 November 455⁹

⁵“兩千年中西曆轉換” (“Liǎng qiān nián zhōng xī lì zhuǎn huàn”), Academia Sinica Center for Digital Cultures, sinocal.sinica.edu.tw/ (accessed 29 May 2021).

⁶Following tradition, I indicate Ctesiphon as the Sasanian capital, but it should be noted that the issue is much more complicated. See Michael Shenkar, “The Coronation of the Early Sasanians, Ctesiphon, and the Great Diadem of Paikuli,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 11 (2018): 113–39. The Sasanian kings were known for being itinerant, a fact noted even in the Chinese primary sources—for example, “**Within his state, the king additionally has over ten small residences, [which are] similar to China’s detached palaces. Every year, on the fourth month, he goes out traveling and stays there, and then returns on the tenth month**” (“王於其國內，別有小牙十餘所，猶中國之離宮也。每年四月出游處之，十月乃還”) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jú, 1903], juàn 102, 魏收 撰 《魏書·卷一百二·列傳第九十·西域·波斯國》光緒癸卯冬十月五洲同文局石印).

⁷Píngchéng (平城): present-day Dàtóng (大同), Shānxī (山西).

⁸The date 25 September 455 is converted from “**Dìng-hài** (the twenty-eighth day) of the **Eighth Month** [of the **Inaugural Year of Tàì’ān**]” ([太安元年]八月丁亥) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 5, 魏收 撰 《魏書·卷五·帝紀第五·高宗紀》).

⁹Only the month in which this event occurred is given: “**Winter, the Tenth Month** [of the **Inaugural Year of Tàì’ān**]” ([太安元年]冬十月); this event is recorded prior to Gēngwǔ (庚午, the twelfth day) of the Tenth Month (7 November 455), and hence occurred sometime between 27 October and 7 November of 455 (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 5, 魏收 撰 《魏書·卷五·帝紀第五·高宗紀》).

Persia and the realm of **Shūlè** (MC **fjo-lək**)¹⁰ **simultaneously dispatched emissaries** to make **audience** [with the emperor] and present **tribute**.

波斯、疏勒國並遣使朝貢。

King Peroz I (r. 459–84) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Gāozōng Wénchéng (高宗文成) Emperor Tuòbá Jùn (拓跋濬) (r. 452–65) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Píngchéng, 平城)

19 August 461¹¹

[The emperor] **traveled in and toured Shānběi**.¹²

行巡山北。

Sometime between 20 August and 19 September 461¹³

The **state of Persia dispatched emissaries** to make **audience** [with the emperor] and **present** [tribute].

波斯國遣使朝獻。

The [imperial] **carriage returned to the palace** [at Píngchéng].

輿駕還宮。

¹⁰Shūlè (MC *fjo-lək*) was located in what later became known as Kashgar (كاشغر).

¹¹The date 19 August 461 is converted from “**Rénwǔ** (the twenty-eighth day) [of the **Seventh Month** of the **Second Year** of **Héping**]” ([和平二年七月]壬午) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 5, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷五·帝紀第五·高宗紀》).

¹²“Shānběi” (meaning “**Mountain’s North**”) refers to a region north of the Zhōngnán Mountain (終南山, *Zhōngnán Shān*) and Tàihuá Mountain (太華山, *Tàihuá Shān*), which are located in Shǎnxī (Shaanxi, 陝西).

¹³Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 5, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷五·帝紀第五·高宗紀》. The date given for the event “The **state of Persia** . . .” is “**Wùchén** of the **Eighth Month** [of the **Second Year** of **Héping**]” ([和平二年]八月戊辰), but the Academia Sinica Center for Digital Cultures’ conversion tool gives an error for Wùchén of that month. The date given for the subsequent event, “The [imperial] carriage . . .” is “**Dīngchǒu**” (丁丑) of the same month, and the conversion tool gives an error for this date, as well. The span of the month was 22 August–19 September 461.

King Peroz I (r. 459–84) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Xiǎnzǔ Xiànwén (顯祖獻文) Emperor Tuòbá Hóng (拓跋弘)
(r. 465–71) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Píngchéng, 平城)

Sometime between 465 and 471¹⁴

The imperial **court dispatched the emissary Hán Yángpí** on [diplomatic] **mission to Persia**; the **King of Persia dispatched emissaries to present tame elephant(s) and precious things**.¹⁵

朝廷遣使者韓羊皮使波斯；波斯王遣使獻馴象及珍物。

Sequel (not a quotation): As the embassy passed through Khotan, the ruler of Khotan kept the elephant(s) and precious things from Persia, giving the excuse that banditry made travel unsafe.¹⁶

24 April 466¹⁷

The **states of Goryeo, Persia, Khotan, and Āxí (MC ʔn-zip)**¹⁸ **dispatched emissaries to make audience [with the emperor] and present [tribute]**.

高麗、波斯、于闐、阿襲諸國遣使朝獻。

¹⁴The time frame for this exchange of emissaries can only be inferred as during the Xiǎnzǔ Xiànwén Emperor's reign, 465–76 (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 102, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷一百二·列傳第九十·西域·于闐國》).

¹⁵As the event “the **King of Persia dispatched emissaries to present tame elephant(s) and precious things**” can be identified only as having occurred sometime between 465 and 476, it may refer to the Persian mission in 466 or 468, rather than an additional mission.

¹⁶“經于闐·于闐中于王秋仁輒留之·假言慮有寇不達·羊皮言狀·顯祖怒·又遣羊皮奉詔責讓之·自後每使朝獻” (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 102, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷一百二·列傳第九十·西域·于闐國》). I have found translating this quotation difficult, especially with regards to “中于.” “王” may mean “king” but may alternatively be the surname of the ruler of Khotan (see Wèi Zhēng and Zhāngsūn Wúji, *Sui shū* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jú, 1903], juàn 83, 魏徵 長孫無忌 等撰《隋書·卷八十三·列傳第四十八·西域·于闐國》光緒癸卯冬十月五洲同文局石印).

¹⁷The date 24 April 466 is converted from “Xīnhài (the twenty-fourth day) of the **Third Month of the Inaugural Year of Tiān’ān**” ([天安元年三月]辛亥) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 6, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷六·帝紀第六·顯祖紀》).

¹⁸I am unable to identify Āxí (阿襲).

2 June 468¹⁹

Goryeo, Kùmòxī (MC k^ho-mòk-fēi), Khitan, Jùfúfú (MC gyo-biuk-piut), Yùyǔlíng (MC ?iuk-fyo-liəŋ), Rilián (MC ɲit-lien), Pǐfěer (MC p^hit-lai-ŋjɛ), Chiliùshǒu (MC tɕ^hit-liuk-ɕiəu), Xīwàndān (MC sit-myon-tənn), Ādàhé (MC ?n-dvi-n), Yǔzhēnhóu (MC fyo-tɕin-fəu), Khotan, and the state of Persia each dispatched emissaries to make audience [with the emperor] and present [tribute].²⁰

高麗、庫莫奚、契丹、具伏弗、郁羽陵、日連、匹黎爾、叱六手、悉萬丹、阿大何、羽真侯、于闐、波斯國各遣使朝獻。

King Peroz I (r. 459–84) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Gāozǔ Xiàowén (高祖孝文) Emperor Yuán²¹ Hóng (元宏) (r. 471–99) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Píngchéng, 平城, until 493, Luòyáng, 洛陽, thenceforth)

Sometime between 11 March and 9 April 476²²

The states of Ruǎnrǎn (i.e., Róurán),²³ Goryeo, Kùmòxī (MC k^ho-mòk-fēi), and Persia simultaneously dispatched emissaries to make audience [with the emperor] and present tribute.

¹⁹The date 2 June 468 is converted from “**Summer, Xīnchǒu** (the twenty-sixth day) of the **Fourth Month** [of the **Second Year of Huángxing**]” ([皇興二年]夏四月辛丑) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 6, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷六·帝紀第六·顯祖紀》).

²⁰With the exception of Khotan and Persia, all the other states mentioned in this entry were in northeastern Asia. Goryeo (高麗), or Goguryeo (高句麗), would become a major power, challenging the Sui (隋) and Táng (唐) during the sixth and seventh centuries. The Khitan founded the Liáo (遼) (916–1125) and [Western] Liáo ([西]遼) (1124–43) states during the tenth century and the twelfth century, respectively.

²¹In 496, the emperor changed the imperial clan’s surname from Tuòbá (拓跋) to Yuán (元).

²²Only the month in which this event occurred is given: “**Spring, the Second Month of the Inaugural Year of Chéngmíng**” (承明元年春二月) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 7, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷七·帝紀第七·高祖紀上》).

²³“Ruǎnrǎn” (or “Rúru,” 蠕蠕), which means “worm(s),” was the Wèi’s derogatory name for the Róurán (柔然), a nomadic power that constituted the primary threat on the Wèi’s northern frontier. See “自號‘柔然’，而役屬於國。後，世祖以其無知，狀類於蟲，故改其號為‘蠕蠕’” (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 103, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷一百三·列傳第九十一·蠕蠕》).

蠕蠕、高麗、庫莫奚、波斯諸國並遣使朝貢。

King Kawad I (r. 488–96 and ca. 499–531) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Shìzōng Xuānwǔ (世宗宣武) Emperor Yuán Kè (元恪) (r. 499–515)
of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Luòyáng, 洛陽)

5 December 507²⁴

The **states** of Yàndā (i.e., Hephthalites), **Persia**, Kěpántuó (MC k^hnt-buon-dŋ),²⁵ Kěwéntí (MC k^hnt-miun-dɛi), Bùnàzhàng (MC piut-nŋ-djŋ), and Niǔzhàngtí (MC ŋiuk-djŋ-dɛi) **simultaneously dispatched emissaries** to make **audience** [with the emperor] and **present** [tribute].²⁶

嚙噠、波斯、渴槃陁、渴文提、不那杖、忸杖提等諸國並遣使朝獻。

King Kawad I (r. 488–96 and ca. 499–531) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Sùzōng Xiàomíng (肅宗孝明) Emperor Yuán Xǔ (元詡) (r. 515–
31 March 528) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Luòyáng, 洛陽)

9 May 517²⁷

The **states** of Goryeo, **Persia**, Shūlè (MC ʃio-lək), and Yàndā (i.e., Hephthalites) **simultaneously dispatched emissaries** to make **audience** [with the emperor] and **present** [tribute].

²⁴The date 5 December 507 is converted from “Xīnwèi (the sixteenth day) [of the **Tenth Month** of the **Fourth Year** of Zhèngshǐ]” ([正始四年冬十月] 辛未) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 8, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷八·帝紀第八·世宗紀》).

²⁵Kěpántuó (渴槃陁) was located east of the Pamir Mountains. See Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 103, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷一百三·列傳第九十一·渴槃陁國》.

²⁶I was unable to identify Kěwéntí (渴文提), Bùnàzhàng (不那杖), and Niǔzhàngtí (忸杖提).

²⁷The date 9 May 517 is converted from “**Summer**, Jiǎwǔ (the fourth day) [of the **Fourth Month** of the **Second Year** of Xīpíng]” ([熙平二年] 夏四月甲午) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 9, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷九·帝紀第九·肅宗紀》).

高麗、波斯、疏勒、嚙噠諸國並遣使朝獻。

14 September 518²⁸

The states of **Persia**, **Shūlè** (MC **ʃio-lək**), **Oddiyana**, and **Kucha** **simultaneously dispatched emissaries** to make **audience** [with the emperor] and **present** [tribute].

波斯、疏勒、烏菴、龜茲諸國並遣使朝獻。

On 14 September 518 (or another date between 26 February 518 and 30 July 520)²⁹

The [said] **state** (i.e., Persia) **dispatched emissaries**, **submitting a letter for presenting things as tribute** that read: “A **grand state’s Son of Heaven, born of Heaven, may he**, [in the land] **where the sun comes out, long be the Son of Heaven in the center of the galaxy. Kawad, King of the state of Persia**, renders **thousands and tens of thousands of reverential salutes.**” The imperial **court happily accepted it. Thenceforth**, [Persia] **often sent emissaries to make audience** [with the emperor] and **present** [tribute].

其國遣使上書貢物，云：“大國天子，天之所生，願日出處常為漢中天子。波斯國王居和多千萬敬拜。”朝廷嘉納之；自此每使朝獻。

10 July 521³⁰

Jūmì (MC **kio-mrit**; Keriya?)³¹ and the **state of Persia** **simultane-**

²⁸The date 14 September 518 is converted from “**Dīngwèi** (the twenty-fourth day) [of the **Leap Seventh Month of the Inaugural Year of Shénguī**]” ([神龜元年閏七月]丁未) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 9, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷九·帝紀第九·肅宗紀》).

²⁹Only the approximate time in which this event occurred is given: “In the **middle of the Shénguī [era]**” (神龜中). Therefore, this account might refer to details of the mission from Persia on 14 September 518, or might refer to another mission from Persia. (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 102, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷一百二·列傳第九十·西域·波斯國》).

³⁰The date 10 July 521 is converted from “**Dīngsì** (the twentieth day) of the **Leap [Fifth] Month [of the Second Year of Zhèngguāng]**” ([正光二年]閏[五]月丁巳) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 9, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷九·帝紀第九·肅宗紀》).

³¹Jūmì (居密) appears to be the Jūmí (拘彌) of earlier times, and if so, would be the region of Keriya (كيريّا), eastern neighbor of Khotan. (Middle Chinese phonology appears to make this plausible but not certain.)

ously dispatched emissaries to make audience [with the emperor] and present [tribute].

居密、波斯國並遣使朝貢。

29 August 522³²

The states of Persia, Bùhàn (MC *piut-høn*),³³ and Kucha simultaneously dispatched emissaries to make audience [with the emperor] and present tribute.

波斯、不漢、龜茲諸國遣使朝貢。

King Kawad I (r. 488–96 and ca. 499–531) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Xiàozhuāng (孝莊) Emperor Yuán Zǐyōu (元子攸) (r. 15 May 528–26 January 531) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Luòyáng, 洛陽)

Sometime between 1 August and 30 August 528³⁴

Meanwhile, the state of Persia presented a lion to the Wèi. [Mòqí] Chǒunú kept it, and changed the era name to “Shénshòu” (“Divine Beast”).

會，波斯國獻師子於魏。醜奴留之，改元神獸。

³²The date 29 August 522 is converted from “Autumn, Rénzǐ (the twenty-second day) of the Seventh Month [of the Third Year of Zhèngguāng]” ([正光三年]秋七月壬子) (Wèi Shōu, *Wèi shū*, juàn 9, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷九·帝紀第九·肅宗紀》).

³³Bùhàn (不漢) appears to be the Bùhàn (怛捍) mentioned in the seventh-century travelogue *Dà Táng Xīyù jì* 《大唐西域記》. If so, this would place it in Ferghana (فرغانه), but Prof. Ji Xiànlín identifies Bùhàn (怛捍) as Pòluònà (破洛那) instead of Bùhàn (不漢) (see Xuán Zàng and Biàn Jī, *Dà Táng Xīyù jì jiào zhù*, ed. Ji Xiànlín [Beijing: Zhōnghuá Shūjú, 1985], 84–85, 玄奘 辯機 原著 季羨林 校注《大唐西域記校注·卷第一·怛捍國》第 84–85 頁 [北京: 中華書局, 1985]). (Middle Chinese phonology appears to make this plausible but not certain.)

³⁴Only the month in which this event occurred is given: “Autumn, the Seventh Month [of the Second Year of Dàtōng]” ([大通二年]秋七月) (Sīmǎ Guāng, *Zī zhì tōng jiàn* [Beijing: Zhōnghuá Shūjú, 1976], 4750, 司馬光 編著《資治通鑑 (全二十冊)·卷第一百五十二·梁紀八·高祖武帝第八》第 4750 頁 [北京: 中華書局, 1976]).

Sequel (not a quotation): Mòqí Chǒunú (万俟醜奴), a renegade general and self-proclaimed emperor, was later suppressed and executed by the general Ērzhū Tiānguāng (爾朱天光) in June 530, and the Wèi court gained the lion.

King Kawad I (r. 488–96 and ca. 499–531) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Jiémǐn (節閔) Emperor Yuán Gōng (元恭) (r. 1 April 528–13 June 532) of [Northern] Wèi ([北]魏) (Capital: Luòyáng, 洛陽)

ca. 530–31

As Ērzhū Tiānguāng exterminated Mòqí Chǒunú, [he] gained for the **first time the lion presented by Persia**, and sent [it] to **Luòyáng**. By that time the **Jiémǐn Emperor** had **acceded to the throne**, and [he] issued an imperial **decree**, reading: “Of **birds and beasts**, to **confine them** would be to **contradict their nature**.” [The emperor] **ordered** [that the lion be] **sent back** to [its] **country of origin** (i.e., Persia). The **emissary**, on account of the way to **Persia** being [too] **long** [and the destination thus] **unreachable**, **killed it en route and returned**. The **relevant administrator(s)** **impeached** [the emissary] for **contravening imperial decree**. The **emperor said**, “**How could a person be made culpable on account of a beast?!**” [The emperor] **then pardoned him**.

爾朱天光之滅萬俟醜奴也，始獲波斯所獻師子，送洛陽。及節閔帝即位，詔曰：“禽獸囚之則違其性。”命送歸本國。使者以波斯道遠不可達，於路殺之而返。有司劾違旨。帝曰：“豈可以獸而罪人？！”遂赦之。³⁵

A eulogy from 2021: Posterity shall always remember Ambassador Sher, who fell in the line of duty.

³⁵Simà Guāng, *Zi zhi tōng jiàn*, 4801, 司馬光 編著《資治通鑑（全二十冊）·卷第一百五十五·梁紀十一·高祖武皇帝十一》第4801頁。

King Kawad I (r. 488–96 and ca. 499–531) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Gāozǔ Wǔ (高祖武) Emperor Xiāo Yǎn (蕭衍) (r. 502–49) of
[Southern] Liáng ([南]梁) (Capital: Jiànkāng,³⁶ 建康)

Sometime between 13 February 530 and 2 February 531³⁷

The **state of Persia** [. . .] made **first contact** with **Jiāngzuǒ**
(i.e., Liáng territory),³⁸ **dispatching emissaries to present**
Buddha’s tooth (or teeth).³⁹

波斯國[...]始通江左,⁴⁰ 遣使獻佛牙。

King Khosrow I (r. 531–79) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Gāozǔ Wǔ (高祖武) Emperor Xiāo Yǎn (蕭衍) (r. 502–49) of
[Southern] Liáng ([南]梁) (Capital: Jiànkāng, 建康)

12 September 533⁴¹

The **state of Persia dispatched emissaries to present local things**
[from Persia].

³⁶Jiànkāng (建康): present-day Nánjīng (南京), Jiāngsū (江蘇).

³⁷Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The **Second Year of Zhōng Dàtōng**” (中大通二年) (Yáo Sīlián, *Liáng shū* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jú, 1903], juàn 54, 姚思廉 撰《梁書·卷五十四·列傳第四十八·諸夷·波斯國》光緒癸卯冬十月五洲同文局石印; and Li Yánshòu, *Nán shǐ* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jú, 1903], juàn 79, 李延壽 撰《南史·卷七十九·列傳第六十九·夷貊下·波斯國》). Curiously, this event is recorded only in the accounts of foreign states, and not in the *Běnjì* (本紀), or “Basic Annals,” of emperors, despite the arrival of other diplomatic missions being recorded for that year.

³⁸“Jiāngzuǒ” (meaning “River’s Left”) refers to the area south and east of the Yangtze River as it flows for about six hundred kilometers in the northeastern direction during its final leg. Jiāngzuǒ was the core territory under [Southern] Liáng rule, and thus, the account records the first contact between the Sasanian Empire and the [Southern] Liáng.

³⁹Teeth purported to be those of the Buddha were highly prized relics. Buddhism enjoyed lavish Liáng patronage. Due to ambiguity, the text may read either “**tooth**” or “**teeth**.”

⁴⁰“Made **first contact** with **Jiāngzuǒ** (i.e., Liáng territory)” (始通江左) is only in Li Yánshòu, *Nán shǐ*, juàn 79, 李延壽 撰《南史·卷七十九·列傳第六十九·夷貊下·波斯國》.

⁴¹The date 12 September 533 is converted from “**Jiǎzǐ** (the eighth day) of the **Eighth Month** of the **Fifth Year of Zhōng Dàtōng**” ([中大通五年八月]甲子) (Yáo Sīlián, *Liáng shū*, juàn 3, 姚思廉 撰《梁書·卷三·本紀第三·武帝下》).

波斯國遣使獻方物。

10 June 535⁴²

The **state of Persia presented local things** [from Persia].

波斯國獻方物。

King Khosrow I (r. 531–79) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Fèi (廢) Emperor Yuán Qīn (元欽) (r. 11 February 552–17 February 554) of [Western] Wèi ([西]魏) (Capital: Cháng'ān, 長安)

Sometime between 30 January 553 and 17 February 554⁴³

Its king (i.e., the king of Persia) **dispatched emissaries to come present local things** [from Persia].

其王遣使來獻方物。

King Khosrow I (r. 531–79) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Gōng (恭) Emperor Yuán Kuò (元廓) (r. 18 February 554–15 January 557) of [Western] Wèi ([西]魏) (Capital: Cháng'ān, 長安)

Sometime between 7 February 555 and 27 January 556⁴⁴

Its king (i.e., the king of Persia) **again**⁴⁵ **dispatched emissaries to**

⁴²The date 10 June 535 is converted from “**Summer, Gēngzǐ** (the twenty-fourth day) of the **Fourth Month** of the **Inaugural Year of Dàtóng**” ([大同元年]夏四月庚子) (Yáo Sīlián, *Liáng shū*, juàn 3, 姚思廉 撰《梁書·卷三·本紀第三·武帝下》).

⁴³Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “**The Second Year** [of the reign] of the **Fèi Emperor of Wèi**” (魏廢帝二年) (Línghú Défēn, *Zhōu shū* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jù, 1903], juàn 50, 令狐德棻 撰《周書·卷五十·列傳第四十二·異域下·波斯國》光緒癸卯冬十月五洲同文局石印).

⁴⁴Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “**The Second Year** [of the reign] of the **Gōng Emperor of Wèi**” (恭帝二年) (Lǐ Yánshòu, *Běi shǐ* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jù, 1903], juàn 97, 李延壽 撰《北史·卷九十七·列傳第八十五·西域·波斯國》).

⁴⁵In context, “again” (又, *yòu*) denotes after the unspecified Persian visits to the [Northern] Wèi that followed the visit on 14 September 518 (or another date between 26 February 518 and 30 July

present local things [from Persia].

其王又遣使獻方物。

King Khosrow I (r. 531–79) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

The Gāozǔ Wǔ (高祖武) Emperor Yǔwén Yōng (宇文邕) (r. 560–78)
of [Northern] Zhōu ([北]周) (Capital: Cháng’ān, 長安)

25 May 567⁴⁶

The **Türks**,⁴⁷ **Tǔyùhún**,⁴⁸ and **Ānxī** (an Iranian polity?)⁴⁹

520), when the quoted letter purportedly from Kawad I was presented. The full text of the account is “神龜中，其國遣使上書貢物，云：‘大國天子，天之所生，願日出處常為漢中天子。波斯國王居和多千萬敬拜。’朝廷嘉納之。自此，每使朝獻。恭帝二年，其王又遣使獻方物。”

⁴⁶The date 25 May 567 is converted from “**Rénshēn** (the second day) of the **Fifth Month** of the **Second Year of Tiānhé**” ([天和二年]五月壬申) (Linghú Dēfēn, *Zhōu shū*, juàn 5, 令狐德棻 撰《周書·卷五·帝紀第武·武帝上》).

⁴⁷*Türks* (突厥, *Tūjué*) in this context refers to a specific steppe nomadic people that constituted the Zhōu’s powerful northern neighbor; scholars have referred to them as *Kök Türk*. It does not refer to Turkic-language speakers in general.

⁴⁸The Tǔyùhún (吐谷渾) were an offshoot of the Mùróng (慕容) branch of the Xiānbēi (鮮卑) people, and hence distant cousins of the [Northern] Wèi and [Northern] Zhōu rulers. At this time, the Tǔyùhún constituted a western neighbor of the [Northern] Zhōu, and were located in what is modern-day Qīnghǎi (青海).

⁴⁹Curiously, the *Zhōu shū* attests to the state of Ānxī (安息) as contemporaneous with Persia (波斯, *Bōsī*). The earliest extant Chinese reference to Ānxī (安息, Old Chinese *pān-sək*) is found in the early-first-century-BC work *Shi jì* 《史記》, in which *Ānxī* refers to a great power, evidently the Parthian Empire. Chinese historical tradition from the *Shi jì* onward relates that there was a state on the western border of Ānxī called Tiáozhī (條枝 條支), and several histories, including the *Wèi shū* and *Zhōu shū*, relate that Persia is located in the land of “ancient Tiáozhī” (古條支, *gǔ Tiáozhī*); in other words, Persia was understood as the successor to Tiáozhī, geographically speaking (*Wèi Shōu*, *Wèi shū*, juàn 102, 魏收 撰《魏書·卷一百二·列傳第九十·西域·波斯國, 安息國, 嚙唃國》); and Linghú Dēfēn, *Zhōu shū*, juàn 50, 令狐德棻 撰《周書·卷五十·列傳第四十二·異域下·嚙唃國, 安息國, 波斯國》). Also, whereas the *Shi jì* refers to Ānxī as a great power with Tiáozhī as its vassal, the *Zhōu shū* refers to Ānxī as a vassal of the Yàndā (嚙唃, Hephthalites), and to Persia as a great power. Thus, the way the *Zhōu shū* relates Ānxī and Persia as contemporaneous does not contradict Chinese historical tradition or the power status of the Sasanian Empire in the sixth century, but it does leave several questions: What was this sixth-century Ānxī state that owed vassalage to the Yàndā? What emissary to the [Northern] Zhōu court would have presented himself, or been regarded by the said court, as representing Ānxī? For an overview of the Chinese primary-source records on Parthia, see Wang Tao, “Parthia in China: A Re-consideration of the Historical Records,” in *The Idea of*

simultaneously dispatched emissaries to present local things
[from their respective lands].

突厥、吐谷渾、安息並遣使獻方物。

Possibly King Hormozd IV (r. 579–90) and definitely Khosrow II
(r. 590–628) (Capital: Ctesiphon)

Possibly the Gāozǔ Wén (高祖文) Emperor Yáng Jiān (楊堅) (r. 581–604)
of Suí (隋), definitely the Yáng (煬) Emperor Yáng Guǎng (楊廣) (r.
604–17) of Suí (隋), and possibly the Gōng (恭) Emperor Yáng Yòu (楊
侑) (r. 19 December 617–17 June 618) of Suí (隋) (Capital: Dàxīng,⁵⁰ 大興)

Sometime between 4 March 581 (but likely no earlier than 14 August
604) and 29 May 618⁵¹

Persia often dispatched emissaries to present tribute.

波斯每遣使貢獻。

Sometime between 14 August 604 and ca. 15 May 607⁵²

Iran, vol. 2, *The Age of the Parthians*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 87–104. On the apparently different “Ānxī” in later times, see David A. Utz, “Aršak, Parthian Buddhists, and ‘Iranian’ Buddhism,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 222 (2012): 179–91. Reference on pp. 179–83.

⁵⁰The Suí’s Dàxīng (大興) was located just southeast of the then-existing Cháng’ān (長安). When the Táng succeeded the Suí, it renamed Dàxīng “Cháng’ān.”

⁵¹The span 4 March 581–29 May 618 was the entire timespan of Suí sovereignty, which is what is implied by the context (Wèi Zhēng and Zhāngsūn Wúji, *Suí shū*, juàn 83, 魏徵 長孫無忌 等撰《隋書·卷八十三·列傳第四十八·西域·波斯國》). The next entry cited in the chronology may imply that the Suí had its first contact with Persia through the mission led by Lǐ Yù; if so, Sasanian dispatchment of emissaries to the Suí would have occurred no earlier than 604. The date 29 May 618 was the official last day of Suí sovereignty recognized by the Táng, which claimed to be the legitimate successor to the Suí. Although Suí sovereignty continued to be recognized outside of Táng-controlled territory for some years after 618, the *Suí shū* was a Táng-commissioned official history, and hence, the work would not recognize any event after 29 May 618 as occurring during Suí rule.

⁵²The time frame for these events fell within the Yáng Emperor’s reign, which according to Táng officialdom was 14 August 604–19 December 617; he continued to reign until his death on 11 April 618, but the Táng recognized him only as emperor emeritus (太上皇, *tài shàng huáng*) during those last months. The office of Cloud[-riding] Cavalry Colonel (雲騎尉, *yún qí wèi*)

The **Yáng Emperor** dispatched **Cloud[-riding] Cavalry Colonel**⁵³ **Lǐ Yù** on [diplomatic] **mission to contact Persia**, which soon thereafter **dispatched emissaries to follow [Lǐ] Yù** [on his return] and present **local things** [from Persia] as **tribute**.

煬帝遣雲騎尉李昱使通波斯·尋遣使隨昱貢方物。

King Yazdegerd III (r. 632–51) (Capital: Ctesiphon until 637, in eastward flight thenceforth)

The Tàizōng (太宗) Emperor Lǐ Shimín (李世民) (r. 626–49) of Táng (唐) (Capital: Cháng’ān,⁵⁴ 長安)

Sometime between 9 February 639 and 28 January 640⁵⁵

Goryeo, Silla, the Western Türks, Tocharia, the Kāng (MC kʰŋ) state, the Ān[xī] state, Persia, Shūlè (MC fjo-lək), Khotan, Agni (Yānqí),⁵⁶ Qocho (Gāochāng), Lām Āp, Kūnmíng (MC kun-miaŋ),⁵⁷ and the barbarian chieftains of the desolate ring,⁵⁸

was evidently abolished on 15 May 607 (大業三年夏四月壬辰), so it may be inferred that at least when Lǐ Yù was dispatched to Persia, the time was prior to the said date; see Wèi Zhēng and Zhāngsūn Wújì, *Suí shū*, juàn 3, 魏徵 長孫無忌 等撰《隋書·卷三·帝紀第三·煬帝上》, s.v. 大業三年夏四月壬辰 and cross-reference with “煬帝即位... 舊都督已上, 至上柱國, 凡十一等, 及八郎、八尉、四十三號將軍, 官皆罷之” (Wèi Zhēng and Zhāngsūn Wújì, *Suí shū*, juàn 28, 《卷二十八·志第二十三·百官下》).

⁵³The *Suí*’s system of ranks was similar to that which the Táng later instituted. “Cloud[-riding] Cavalry Colonel” was somewhere between full rank six and deputy rank nine, hence a junior officer overall (Wèi Zhēng and Zhāngsūn Wújì, *Suí shū*, juàn 28, 魏徵 長孫無忌 等撰《隋書·卷二十八·志第二十三·百官下》, s.v. 開皇六年).

⁵⁴The Táng’s Cháng’ān was the same city as the Suí’s Dàxīng, located just southeast of the Cháng’ān of pre-Suí times.

⁵⁵Only the year in which these events occurred is given: “The **Thirteenth Year of Zhēngguàn**” (貞觀十三年) (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jú, 1903], juàn 3, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷三·本紀第三·太宗下》光緒癸卯冬十月五洲同文局石印).

⁵⁶Agni later became known as Qarashahr (قاراشهر).

⁵⁷Kūnmíng (昆明) was a power on the Táng’s southwestern frontier and also bordered Tibet.

⁵⁸Desolate ring (荒服, *huāngfú*) was part of a geographical conception from the ancient Zhōu (周) period (ca. 1046–256 BC), whereby the world beyond the ruler’s capital is divided into five concentric rings (服, *fú*), the outermost ring being the desolate ring.

one **after another**, **dispatched emissaries** to make **audience** [with the emperor] and present **tribute**.

高麗、新羅、西突厥、吐火羅、康國、安國、波斯、踈勒、于闐、焉耆、高昌、林邑、昆明及荒服蠻酋相次遣使朝貢。

Conflicting information: either sometime between 21 January 638 and 8 February 639⁵⁹ or sometime between 10 February 647 and 29 January 648⁶⁰

Yazdegerd dispatched emissaries to present a beast, named “live mattress snake,”⁶¹ whose **shape** is in the **class** of a **mouse but blue-green in color**; its **body** is **eight, nine cùn** (~22–28 cm) **long**,⁶² and **could enter a hole** to catch (**take**) **mouse**.

伊嗣候遣使獻一獸，名“活褥蛇”，形類鼠而色青，身長八九寸，能入穴取鼠。

During the late reign of King Yazdegerd III (r. 632–51) and the reign of King Peroz III (r. ca. 651⁶³/662–ca. 677) (Capital: Jílíng, 疾陵, MC dzit-liəŋ)⁶⁴

The Gāozōng (高宗) Emperor Lǐ Zhì (李治) (r. 649–83) of Táng (唐) (Capital: Cháng’ān, 長安)

⁵⁹Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The **Twelfth Year of Zhēnguàn**” (貞觀十二年) (Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū* [Shanghai: Wūzhōu Tóngwén Jú, 1903], juàn 221 xià, 歐陽修 宋祁 等撰《新唐書·卷二百二十一下·列傳第一百四十六下·西域·波斯》光緒癸卯冬十月五洲同文局石印).

⁶⁰Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The **Twenty-First Year of Zhēnguàn**” ([貞觀二十一年) (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷一百九十八·列傳第一百四十八·西域諸國·波斯國》).

⁶¹I surmise that this animal was some kind of ferret or weasel. I would like to thank *ostād* Leila Rahimi Bahmany for her support, and *ostād* Mazdak Khajehpour for his input, which included the possibility of this animal as a mongoose.

⁶²A *cùn* (寸) is estimated to have been 2.8–3.1 cm (see “唐代度量衡制” [“Táng dài dù liàng héng zhì”], Baidu (百科), baiku.baidu.com/item/唐代度量衡制 [accessed 29 May 2021]). By the said figures, 8 *cùn* would come to 22.4–24.8 cm, while 9 *cùn* would come to 25.2–27.9 cm.

⁶³Indicating the year 651 is done merely to account for the possibility that Peroz III claimed the Sasanian throne upon Yazdegerd III’s death. I am unaware of any primary-source evidence that this took place.

⁶⁴In both the *Jiù Táng shū* and *Xīn Táng shū*, the city is called Jílíng (疾陵, MC dzit-liəŋ),

Most of the events in the chronology hereon are documented in both the *Jiù Táng shū* (*JTS*) and *Xīn Táng shū* (*XTS*). As the *JTS* is the older source, it will be used as the basis for the chronology. The *XTS* accounts are given in the appendix.

ca. 650s⁶⁵

Yazdegerd was timid and weak, chased away by [his] great chiefs. [He] then fled toward Tocharia. Having yet to arrive, [he] was already killed by Tajik (i.e., Arab)⁶⁶ soldiers. His son was named Peroz, who then sought refuge with the yabghu⁶⁷ of Tocharia, gaining relief.⁶⁸ (*JTS*)

伊嗣候懦弱，爲大首領所逐，遂奔吐火羅。未至，亦爲大食兵所殺。其子名卑路斯，又投吐火羅葉護，獲免。

Sometime between 1 February 656 and 4 April 661⁶⁹

which has widely been identified as Zaranj (زرنج). I have noticed a number of Internet sources saying that it is Zabul (زابل), which is very close to Zaranj. Hamidreza Pashazanous and Ehsan Afkande argue that the city should be in Tocharia (Tocharistan), but have yet to identify a specific alternative city (see Hamidreza Pashazanous and Ehsan Afkande, “The Last Sasanians in Eastern Iran and China,” *Anabasis: Studia Classica et Orientalia* 5 [2014]: 139–54, reference on pp. 140–46). While I am not qualified to draw conclusions on this issue, I would like to raise a possibility for scholars to consider: As the Táng officially established the Superintendency of Persia (波斯都督府, *Bōsī dūdū fū*), might Jiling (疾陵, MC dzit-liəŋ) be a purely Chinese name, despite the resemblance with Zaranj? After all, there were many two-character name localities with *-ling* (陵) as the second character.

⁶⁵Inferred from context. See Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷一百九十八·列傳第一百四十八·西域諸國·波斯國》。

⁶⁶The Chinese historical sources refer to the Arabs as *Tajik* (from تاجیک).

⁶⁷*Yabghu* is a high-ranking Turkish title. Tocharia at the time was under the Western Türks.

⁶⁸See Touraj Daryaee, “Yazdegerd’s Last Year: Coinage and History of Sīstān at the End of Late Antiquity,” in *Festschrift für Erich Kettenhofen*, ed. Touraj Daryaee and O. Tabibzadeh, *Iranistik: Deutschsprachige Zeitschrift für iranistische Studien* 5, vols. 1 & 2 (Tehran: Iran-Universitätsverlag, 2006–7), 21–29.

⁶⁹Only the approximate time in which this event occurred is given: “In the **middle** of the **Xiǎn-qīng years**” (顯慶年中). The primary source is the epitaph of Āluóhàn (阿羅憾). I consulted a low-resolution image of the epitaph (“阿罗憾” [“Āluóhàn”], 快懂百科 [Kuài dǒng bǎikē], www.baikē.com/wiki/id/7102552629280730417 [accessed 24 May 2021]), checked against “大唐故波斯國大酋長右屯衛將軍上柱國金城郡開國公波斯君丘之銘” (“Dà Táng gù Bōsī guó dà qiúzhǎng yòu túnwèi jiāngjūn shàng zhù guó jīnchéng jùn kāiguó gōng Bōsī jūn qiū zhī

Epitaph of the tomb of a Persian gentleman, the Great Táng's late grand chieftain of the state of Persia, General of the Right Garrison Guard, High Pillar of State, Kāiguó⁷⁰ Duke of Jīnchéng Province⁷¹: The gentleman's name⁷² was Āluóhàn (Wahrām?); [his] clan was distinguished; [he] was a person of the state of Persia. In the middle of the Xiǎnqīng years, the Gāozōng Heavenly Sovereign Dà⁷³ Emperor, on account of [Āluóhàn's] merits and achievements being noteworthy and [his] name being renowned {in the Western Region⁷⁴}, sent out emissaries to summon [him] to come and arrive here, upon which time [he] was appointed {Right} Emissary-in-Charge of Commanding the Army at the North Gate⁷⁵ □□□ and commissioned as Grand Emissary for Cooptation and Mollification of the Various Domains of the State of Fúlín. And on the western border of Fúlín, [he] erected a stele, which still stands (exists) solemnly.⁷⁶

míng”), 維琪文庫 (Wéi qí wén kù), zh.m.wikisource.org/zh-hant/大唐故波斯國大酋長右屯衛將軍上柱國金城郡開國公波斯君丘之銘 (accessed 24 May 2021).

⁷⁰“Kāiguó” (開國) which evidently means “[for whom a feudatory] state [was] established,” is an integral and standard part of the title of the peerage.

⁷¹A General of the Right Garrison Guard (右屯衛將軍, *yòu tún wèi jiāngjūn*) was a military functionary officer (武職事官, *wǔ zhí shì guān*) of the deputy third rank (從第三品, *zòng dì sān pǐn*). A High Pillar of State (上柱國, *shàng zhù guó*) was an honorary officer (勳官, *xūn guān*) of the full second rank (正第二品, *zhèng dì èr pǐn*). Kāiguó Duke of Jīnchéng Province (金城郡開國公, *Jīnchéng jùn kāiguó gōng*) was a peerage of the full second rank.

⁷²“Name” is translated from *huì* (諱), which means “to avoid mention.” In the case of the epitaph, it was necessary to mention the personal name for informational purposes, so *huì* was written to signify that despite having to mention the personal name, respect was intended. This was a common practice.

⁷³At the time this account was written, Dà (大) was part of the Gāozōng Emperor's posthumous name (諡, *shì*) (“羣臣上諡曰：‘天皇大帝，廟號高宗’” [Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 5, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷五·本紀第五·高宗下》，s.v. 弘道元年]). The posthumous name Dà means “Adhering to Heaven and Emulating Yáo” (則天法堯, *zé Tiān fǎ Yáo*), Yáo being a legendary sage ruler (see Sū Xún, *Shì fǎ*, Qīndìng sì kù quán shū: shǐ bù 13 [n.p.: n.p., 1781/82], juàn 2, 42, 蘇洵 撰《欽定四庫全書·史部·十三·諡法·卷二·十四》乾隆四十六年十一月).

⁷⁴Western Region (西域, Xīyù) was the Chinese name for Central Asia.

⁷⁵{Right} Emissary-in-Charge of Commanding the Army at the North Gate” is my tentative translation of *jiāng jūn běimén {yòu} lǐng shǐ* (將軍北門{右}領使), which appears to be a commission (差, *chāi*). However, I am unfamiliar with this title and may have mistranslated.

⁷⁶Although Chinese sources traditionally equate Fúlín (拂林 拂菻) with the Eastern Roman Empire (i.e., Dà Qín, 大秦), in the context of the epitaph, Fúlín refers to a place in Central Asia,

大唐故波斯國大酋長，右屯衛將軍、上柱國、金城郡開國公波斯君丘之銘。君諱阿羅憾，族望，波斯國人也。顯慶年中，高宗天皇大帝以功績可稱，名聞{西域}，出使，召來至此，即授將軍北門{右}領使，□□□，又差拂林國諸蕃招慰大使，并於拂林西界立碑，峨峨尚在。

Note: “□” means an undeciphered Chinese character. “{ }” means the best reading of one or more characters.

Sometime between 5 April 661 and 24 January 662⁷⁷ and the dispatchment of emissaries in presumably the years afterwards

Peroz memorialized (i.e., submitted a message to) [the emperor] in the **Inaugural Year** of **Lóngshuò**, stating that [he] was **frequently being invaded and harassed by the Tajiks**, and **requests soldiers for relief and aid**. [The emperor] **decreed the dispatching of Wáng Míngyuǎn, Magistrate of Nányóu District**,⁷⁸ **Lǒng Prefecture, as emissary to the Western Region to divide and organize** [the region into] **prefectures and districts, thereupon making its** (i.e., the Western Region's) **territory of Jílíng (MC dzit-liəŋ) City as the Headquarters of the Superintendency of Persia, and appointing Peroz as superintendent**.⁷⁹ **Several times**

as it is inconceivable that Āluóhàn would be sent to the Eastern Roman Empire and have a stele erected on the empire's western borders.

⁷⁷Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The **Inaugural Year** of **Lóngshuò**” (龍朔元年) (Líu Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷一百九十八·列傳第一百四十八·西戎》).

⁷⁸The magistrate of Nányóu District would have been a junior officer. His precise rank would have depended on the designation of the district as “upper” (上, *shàng*) (in which case, he would have been a deputy six upper, 從第六品上階, *zòng dì liù pǐn shàng jiē*); “middle” (中, *zhōng*) (full seven upper, 正第七品上階, *zhèng dì qī pǐn shàng jiē*); or “lower” (下, *xià*) (deputy seven upper, 從第七品上階, *zòng dì qī pǐn shàng jiē*). See Líu Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 42, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷四十二·志第二十二·職官一》.

⁷⁹A superintendent (都督, *dūdū*) was basically a governor-general. There were “grand” (大, *dà*), “middle” (中, *zhōng*), and “lower” (下, *xià*) superintendents. The Superintendency of Persia was evidently equal to a middle superintendency, and if so, the rank of its superintendent would have been full rank three (正第三品, *zhèng dì sān pǐn*). However, if it had been equal to a lower superintendency, the rank would have been deputy rank three (從第三品, *zòng dì sān pǐn*). See Líu Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 42, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷四十二·志第二十二·職官一》.

thereafter, [Peroz] sent emissaries to present tribute. (*JTS*)

卑路斯龍朔元年奏言，頻被大食侵擾，請兵救援。詔遣隴州南由縣令王名遠充使西域，分置州縣，因列其地疾陵城為波斯都督府，授卑路斯為都督。是後數遣使貢獻。

14 February 662⁸⁰

[The emperor] installed Peroz, Superintendent of Persia, as King of Persia.

立波斯都督卑路斯為波斯王。

Sometime between 27 March 670 and 5 September 674⁸¹

Peroz himself came and entered the court; the Gāozōng [Emperor] greatly increased favors and bestowments, and appointed (saluted) [Peroz] as General of the Right Martial Guard.⁸² (*JTS*)

⁸⁰The date 14 February 662 is converted from “Spring, Xīnhài (the twenty-first day) of the First Month of [Lóngshuò]” (龍朔二年春正月辛亥). See Simā Guāng, *Zi zhì tōng jiàn*, 6326, 司馬光 編著《資治通鑑 (全二十冊) · 卷第二百 · 唐紀十六 · 高宗天皇大聖大弘孝皇帝上之下》第 6326 頁。

⁸¹Only the approximate time in which this event occurred is given: “In the middle of the Xiánhēng [era]” (咸亨中) (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書 · 卷一百九十八 · 列傳第一百四十八 · 西戎 · 波斯國》)。

⁸²General of the Right Martial Guard was deputy rank three and a military functionary officership. The officership was so named during a period that lasted from ca. 661–64 to ca. 705–7. Before and after that period, it was called *General of the Right Swift Horse Guard* (右驍衛將軍, *yòu xiāo wèi jiāngjūn*) (see Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 42, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書 · 卷四十二 · 志第二十二 · 職官一》, s.v. 光宅元年, and juàn 44, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書 · 卷四十四 · 志第二十四 · 職官三》, s.v. 武官). Records of an inscription of a statue of Peroz III (which still exists but with eroded inscription) purportedly reads “Grand General of the Right Swift Horse Guard” (右驍衛大將軍兼波斯都督波斯王卑路斯), a full rank three officership, which would constitute a promotion from General of the Right Martial Guard (see Lǐ Hàowén, *Cháng ān tú zhì*, *Qīndìng sì kù quán shū: shǐ bù 16* [n.p.: n.p., 1751], juàn zhōng, 9, 李好文 撰《欽定四庫全書 · 史部 · 十一 · 長安圖志 · 卷中 · 九》乾隆十六年六月). Peroz III was probably promoted late in life or posthumously. According to one study, Peroz “received the illustrious office of a ‘Great general of the Martial Guards of the Left’ (左驍衛大將軍) within the imperial guards” (Agostini and Stark, “Zāwulistān,” 19, 19nn6–7; Agostini and Stark’s translation “Martial” equates to the present article’s translation “Swift Horse”). Due to lack of materials, I was unable to trace this information according to the citation, but this information is curious, as 左驍衛大將軍 is higher in precedence than 右驍衛大將軍, which is given in the aforesaid inscription, and it would seem odd that Peroz would be demoted.

卑路斯自來入朝; 高宗甚加恩賜, 拜右武衛將軍。

17 January 675⁸³

King Peroz of Persia came to court. (JTS)

波斯王卑路斯來朝。

Sometime between 8 February 677 and 27 January 678⁸⁴

The **Persian Hú**⁸⁵ Temple southeast of the cross street [of the Lǐquán Sector]⁸⁶: In the **Second Year of Yífèng**, **King Peroz of Persia memorialized** (i.e., submitted a message to) [the emperor], **requesting to establish a Persian temple at this** [place].

[醴泉坊]十字街南之東波斯胡寺：儀鳳二年，波斯王畢路斯奏請

Regarding the inscription, it has been suggested that “If we take these titles as merely honorary and see in the word ‘Persia’ an equivalent for Ērānšahr, then it would be redundant to call someone ‘King of Persia’ and ‘Commander in chief of Persia’. On the other hand, we may assume that ‘King of Persia’ indicates kingdom lost (i.e., Ērānšahr), while ‘Commander in chief of Persia’ indicates that Chi-ling was given to Pērōz by the Tang emperor as a fiefdom” (Pashazanous and Afkande, “Last Sasanians,” 147). It must be noted, however, that “King of Persia” (波斯王, *Bōsī wáng*) was a peerage (爵, *jué*), while “波斯都督” (*Bōsī dūdū*) (Pashazanous’s translation “Commander in chief” equates to the present article’s translation “Superintendent of Persia”) was an officership (官, *guān*). Thus, if anything was a “fiefdom,” it was the “state of Persia” (波斯國, *Bōsī guó*), ruled by the King of Persia. At the same time, the “Superintendency of Persia” (波斯都督府, *Bōsī dūdū fǔ*) was the administrative purview of the “Superintendent of Persia” (波斯都督, *Bōsī dūdū*), a non-hereditary officership. Indeed, in giving the two titles, the Táng emperor intended no redundancy, but the actual reason for which there was no redundancy is as explained.

⁸³The date 17 January 675 is converted from “Xīnmǎo (the sixteenth day) of the Twelfth Month of the Inaugural Year of Shàngyuán” ([上元元年十二月]辛卯) (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 5, 劉昫撰《舊唐書·卷五·本紀第五·高宗下》).

⁸⁴Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The Second Year of Yífèng” (儀鳳二年) (Wéi Shù, *Liǎng jīng xīn jì* [n.p.: Zhèngjué lóu, 1881/82], juàn 1, 韋述撰《兩京新記·卷第一·醴泉坊·十字街南之東波斯胡寺》光緒七年仲冬重槩 [正覺樓叢書]).

⁸⁵In Táng times, *Hú* (胡) referred to all peoples to the north and in Central Asia. The term may have the connotation of “barbarian,” but it was also a widely used neutral term.

⁸⁶*Cháng’ān* basically had a grid layout. The imperial palace was in the north of the city. The rest of the city was mostly divided into rectangular sectors (坊, *fāng*). *Lǐquán Sector* (醴泉坊, *Lǐquán Fāng*) was in the northwestern part of the city. Each sector had a main perpendicular cross street that effectively divided the sector into four quarters. This Persian temple would therefore have been located in the southeastern quarter of *Lǐquán Sector*.

於此置波斯寺。

King Narseh (r. ca. 678–709)

The Gāozōng (高宗) Emperor Lǐ Zhì (李治) (r. 649–83) of Táng (唐)
(Capital: Cháng’ān, 長安)

Sometime between 8 February 677 and 27 January 678⁸⁷

In the **Second Year** of Yifèng, Āshǐnà Fúyán⁸⁸ Dūzhī (MC **to-tei**), Qaghan of the Ten Clans,⁸⁹ and Lǐ Zhēfú incited peripheral domain tribes to invade and press toward [the] Ānxī [Protectorate],⁹⁰ and allied with the Tibetans. Discussants (i.e., Táng officials eligible to deliberate or present their opinions on the matter) wished to send soldiers to wage punitive war against them. Péi Xíngjiǎn rendered advice, stating: “The Tibetans have wreaked havoc, and the clash of arms has yet to cease; [Lǐ] Jìngxuán and [Liú] Shěnlǐ lost order (i.e., suffered defeat in battle) and forfeited [their] heads.⁹¹ How could [we] cause further [problematic] affairs for [the sake of] the west? Presently, the body of the King of Persia has expired (i.e., he died). His son Narseh is at the capital serving as collateral. [Your Majesty’s servitor (i.e., I)] hope that an emissary may be commissioned to go to Persia and invest [Narseh as king], and as [the escort] passes by the tribes of the two peripheral domains (i.e., Dūzhī and Lǐ Zhēfú’s tribes) along

⁸⁷Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The **Second Year** of Yifèng” (儀鳳二年) (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 84, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷八十四·列傳第三十四·裴行儉》).

⁸⁸Fúyán (馮延) was not part of Dūzhī (都支) Qaghan’s name, but rather the name of the command he held. The Táng established the Fúyán Superintendency (馮延都督府, *Fúyán dūdū fǔ*), with Dūzhī as superintendent.

⁸⁹The Ten Clans (十姓, *Shí xìng*) were an offshoot of the Western Türks.

⁹⁰The Ānxī Protectorate (安西都護府, *Ānxī dūhù fǔ*) was the Táng’s overall administrative unit in Central Asia, not to be confused with Ānxī (安息), the aforementioned possible Iranian polity and the Parthian Empire.

⁹¹This normally means that they died, but the accounts are unclear. Lǐ Jìngxuán evidently did not die, while Liú Shěnlǐ might have been reported as killed in action but was evidently captured alive. Information about this is found in various parts of the *Jiù Táng shū* and *Xīn Táng shū*.

the **way, matters** [would be handled] following what is **convenient** and **appropriate**, and [by this plan] **certainly** there **would be** success (**merit**).” (*JTS*)

Sometime between 3 October 678 and 15 February 679⁹² (text above continues)

The **Gāozōng** [Emperor] **followed it** (i.e., Péi Xíngjiǎn’s advice), **thereupon commanding Xíngjiǎn** [to see to the] **investiture** of, and to **escort**, the **King of Persia**. [Péi Xíngjiǎn] **thus became Emissary for Tranquility and Mollification** of the **Tajiks**. (*JTS*)

儀鳳二年，十姓可汗阿史那匭延都支及李遮匭扇動蕃落，侵逼安西，連和吐蕃。議者欲發兵討之。[裴]行儉建議曰：“吐蕃叛渙，干戈未息；[李]敬玄、[劉]審禮，失律喪元，安可更爲西方生事？今波斯王身沒，其子泥涅師師⁹³充質在京，望差使往波斯冊立，即路由二蕃部落，便宜從事，必可有功。”高宗從之，因命行儉冊送波斯王，仍爲安撫大食使。⁹⁴

In the **Third Year of Yifèng**, [the emperor] **ordered Péi Xíngjiǎn, Servant-Attendant** (i.e., de facto vice minister) of the **Ministry of Personnel**⁹⁵ to **command soldiers**, and [see to] the **investiture** and **escort** of **Peroz** (*sic*, should be Narseh) as **King of Persia**. **Xíngjiǎn, on account** of the **route** [to Persia] being [too] **long**,

⁹²Based on the next *Jiù Táng shū* account cited in the chronology, the year in which Péi Xíngjiǎn expressed these words must have been the Third Year of Yifèng (儀鳳三年), which spanned 28 January 678–15 February 679. The Táng defeat suffered at the hands of the Tibetans, mentioned by Péi Xíngjiǎn in the same memorial, occurred on 3 October 678 (see Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 5, 劉昫撰《舊唐書·卷五·本紀第五·高宗下》, s.v. 儀鳳三年九月丙寅).

⁹³“泥涅師師” is the same as “泥涅師” in the *Xīn Táng shū* 《新唐書》. “泥涅師師” is evidently not an inadvertent misspelling, as this spelling is also used for the name of a king of the Kāng (MC kʰɔŋ) state (康國, *Kāng guó*), which is in the territory of Samarqand (see Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫撰《舊唐書·卷一百九十八·列傳第一百四十八·西戎·康國》).

⁹⁴This account is the immediate continuation of the previously cited account, from Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 84, 劉昫撰《舊唐書·卷八十四·列傳第三十四·裴行儉》.

⁹⁵Despite being assigned to the Ministry of Personnel at the time, Péi Xíngjiǎn had an extensive frontier military career. In Táng times and earlier, it was common to have mixed military and civil careers.

arrived at Suiyè, [the] Ānxī [Protectorate] and returned. Peroz (*sic*, should be Narseh) returned [toward Persia] alone, and was not able to enter his state. [He] was invaded by the Tajiks, and was guest in the state of Tocharia for twenty some years. [He] had tribes of thousands of people, which later gradually dispersed. (*JTS*)

儀鳳三年，令吏部侍郎裴行儉將兵，冊送卑路斯 (*sic*) 為波斯王。行儉以其路遠，至安西碎葉而還，卑路斯 (*sic*) 獨返，不得入其國；漸為大食所侵，客於吐火羅國二十餘年；有部落數千人，後漸離散。⁹⁶

Sequel to Péi Xíngjiǎn's escort mission (not a quotation): Péi Xíngjiǎn took the opportunity of escorting Narseh to arrest Dūzhī and Lǐ Zhēfú, avoiding all-out war.

King Narseh (r. ca. 678–709)

The Zhōngzōng (中宗) Emperor Lǐ Xiǎn (李顯) (r. 684, 705–10) of Táng (唐) (Capital: Cháng'ān, 長安)

Sometime between 28 January 708 and 14 February 709⁹⁷

By the second year of Jǐnglóng, [Peroz] (*sic*, should be Narseh) again came and entered the court, and was appointed (saluted) as General of the Left Awe-Inspiring Guard.⁹⁸ Soon thereafter, [he] became ill and expired. His state thereupon perished, but units [of followers, subjects] still exist. (*JTS*)

⁹⁶This account is from Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷一百九十八·列傳第一百四十八·西戎·波斯國》。

⁹⁷Only the year in which these events occurred is given: “The Second Year of Jǐnglóng” (景龍二年) (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 198, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷一百九十八·列傳第一百四十八·西戎·波斯國》)。

⁹⁸General of the Left Awe-Inspiring Guard (左威衛將軍, *zuǒ wēi wèi jiāngjūn*) was deputy rank three, but lower in ceremonial precedence than the General of the Right Martial Guard (右武衛將軍, *yòu wǔ wèi jiāngjūn*). The Awe-Inspiring Guard (威衛, *wēi wèi*) was the same as the Garrison Guard (屯衛, *tún wèi*), just named differently during different periods.

至景龍二年·[卑路斯] (*sic*) 又來入朝·拜為左威衛將軍·無何病卒·其國遂滅·而部眾猶存。

4 May 710⁹⁹

[Having lived] **ninety-five springs and autumns**, [Āluóhàn came to the] **end** [of his life] **at** [his] **private residence** in the **Eastern Capital** (i.e., Luòyáng, 洛陽).

春秋九十有五·終於東都之私第也。

Conclusion

I hope that the annotated chronology provides access to primary-source information on a chapter of history otherwise closed to non-Sinologists. The incompleteness of this work is obvious. May specialists, especially those with proficiency in Middle Persian and Middle Chinese, work toward a more complete and accurate chronology in the future.

Appendix: ca. 650s–710 according to the XTS Accounts

During the late reign of King Yazdegerd III (r. 632–51) and the reign of King Peroz III (r. ca. 651/662–ca. 677) (Capital: Jílíng, 疾陵, MC dzit-liəŋ)

The Gāozōng (高宗) Emperor Lǐ Zhì (李治) (r. 649–83) of Táng (唐) (Capital: Cháng’ān, 長安)

ca. 650s¹⁰⁰

Yazdegerd did not rule, being chased away by [his] great chiefs. [He] fled to Tocharia. Halfway, Tajik soldiers attacked and killed him. [His] son Peroz entered Tocharia to [gain] relief. [Peroz] dispatched emissaries to report of the distress. The

⁹⁹The date 4 May 710 is converted from “The 1st Day of the Fourth Month of the Inaugural Year of Jǐngyún” (景雲元年四月一日). See “阿罗憾” (“Āluóhàn”).

¹⁰⁰Inferred from context. See Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 221 xià, 歐陽修 宋祁 等撰《新唐書·卷二百二十一下·列傳第一百四十六下·西域·波斯》.

Gāozōng [Emperor], on account of it being far and [thus] not viable to deploy an army, declined to dispatch [one]. Meanwhile, the **Tajiks withdrew**, and **Tocharia accepted him by [affording] military [protection]**.

伊嗣俟不君，爲大酋所逐，奔吐火羅。半道，大食擊殺之。子卑路斯入吐火羅以免。遣使者告難。高宗以遠不可師，謝遣。會大食解而去，吐火羅以兵納之。

The early part of sometime between 5 April 661 and 1 February 664¹⁰¹

In the **beginning** of the **Lóngshuò** [era], [Peroz] also reported in distress that [he] was **being invaded by the Tajiks**. At that time, the **Son of Heaven** (i.e., the emperor) was **dispatching an emissary to reach the Western Region**, and **divide and organize [the region into] prefectures and districts**, with **Jíling (MC dzit-liəŋ) City as the Headquarters of the Superintendency of Persia**, upon which time [the emperor] appointed (saluted)¹⁰² **Peroz as superintendent**. Soon thereafter [the state of Persia] was **extinguished by the Tajiks**.

Sometime between 27 March 670 and 5 September 674¹⁰³

Although [Peroz] was **unable** [to have, to rule] a **state**, in the **middle** of the **Xiánhēng** [era], [he] **still entered the court**, and [the emperor] **appointed [him] General of the Right Martial Guard**. [Later, Peroz] **died**.

¹⁰¹Only the approximate time in which this event occurred is given: “In the **beginning** of the **Lóngshuò** [era]” (龍朔初) (Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 221 xià, 歐陽修 宋祁等撰《新唐書·卷二百二十一·列傳第一百四十六下·西域·波斯》). The *Jiù Táng shū* gives a more precise time (see corresponding account).

¹⁰²“Saluted” is translated from *bài* (拜), which means “salute” (noun), “to salute,” “to pay respect.” A legacy of antiquity, when a ruler appointed a high-ranking officer, it was a favor to the appointee, but it was also understood that the ruler held the appointee in esteem for his abilities, entrusting him with the fortunes of the state. Practically speaking, *bài* means the same as *shòu* (授, to grant [appointment]).

¹⁰³Only the approximate time in which this event occurred is given: “In the **middle** of the **Xiánhēng** [era]” (咸亨中) (Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 221 xià, 歐陽修 宋祁等撰《新唐書·卷二百二十一·列傳第一百四十六下·西域·波斯》).

雖不能國·咸亨中猶入朝·授右武衛將軍·死。

King Narseh (r. ca. 678–709)

The Gāozōng (高宗) Emperor Lǐ Zhì (李治) (r. 649–83) of Táng (唐)
(Capital: Cháng'ān, 長安)

Sometime between 8 February 677 and 27 January 678¹⁰⁴

In the **Second Year** of Yífèng, Āshǐnà Dūzhī, Qaghan of the **Ten Clans**, and Lǐ Zhēfú enticed peripheral domain tribes to unsettle [the] Ānxī [Protectorate], and **allied with the Tibetans**. The [imperial] **court wished to wage punitive war against them**.

Sometime between 3 October 678 and 15 February 679¹⁰⁵ (text above continues)

Péi Xíngjiǎn advised, stating: “The [flames of] **havoc** wreaked by the **Tibetans** are **still burning bright**. [Lǐ] **Jìngxuán lost order** (i.e., suffered defeat in battle) and [Liú] **Shěnlǐ forfeited** [his] head. **How could** [we] **cause further** [problematic] **affairs for** [the sake of] the **west**? **Presently**, the **King of Persia has died**. **His son Narseh** is **collateral** at the **capital**. **If** [Your Majesty] **dispatches an emissary to install him** [as king], as [the escort] **embarks on the way** toward the **two peripheral domains** (i.e., Dūzhī and Lǐ Zhēfú’s tribes), **if affairs** are put in **order** by what is **expedient**, success (**merit**) can be **achieved without labor** (i.e., without strenuous effort).” The **emperor thereupon decreed that**

¹⁰⁴Only the year in which this event occurred is given: “The **Second Year** of Yífèng” (儀鳳二年) (Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 108, 歐陽修 宋祁 等撰《新唐書·卷一百八·列傳第三十三·劉裴婁》).

¹⁰⁵See footnote 92. There is no explicit information in the *Xīn Táng shū* that would contradict the reasoning in that footnote. The *Xīn Táng shū* agrees with the *Jiù Táng shū* as to the date of the Táng defeat suffered at the hands of the Tibetans, which Péi Xíngjiǎn mentioned (i.e., 3 October 678) (see Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 3, 歐陽修 宋祁 等撰《新唐書·卷三·本紀第三·高宗》, s.v. 儀鳳三年九月丙寅). However, in terms of dating, the *Xīn Táng shū* differs with the *Jiù Táng shū* concerning the next account.

Xíngjiǎn [see to the] investiture of, and to **escort**, the **King of Persia**. Moreover, [Péi Xíngjiǎn] became **Emissary for Tranquility and Mollification** of the **Tajiks**.

儀鳳二年，十姓可汗阿史那都支及李遮旬誘蕃落以動安西，與吐蕃連和。朝廷欲討之。[裴]行儉議曰：“吐蕃叛渙方熾，敬玄失律，審禮喪元，安可更為西方生事？今波斯王死，其子泥涅師質京師，有如遣使立之，即路出二蕃，若權以制事，可不勞而功也。”帝因詔行儉冊送波斯王，且為安撫大食使。

Sometime between 16 February 679 (or 15 July 679) and 5 February 680¹⁰⁶

In the **beginning**, his (i.e., Peroz's) **son Narseh** was **collateral**. In the Inaugural Year of **Tiáolù**, [the emperor] **decreed** that **Péi Xíngjiǎn** **command** soldiers to **protect** [Narseh on his] **return**, to **support** the **restoration** [of him]¹⁰⁷ as **king** of **his state**. **On account** of the way being [too] **long**, **Xíngjiǎn** arrived at **Suìyè**, [the] **Ānxī** [Protectorate] and **returned**. **Narseh** was **then** **guest** in **Tocharia** for **twenty years**, and [his] **tribes** **gradually dispersed**.

始，其子泥涅師為質。調露元年，詔裴行儉將兵護還，將復王其國。以道遠，至安西碎葉，行儉還。泥涅師因客吐火羅二十年，部落益離散。

King Narseh (r. ca. 678–709)

The Zhōngzōng (中宗) Emperor Lǐ Xiǎn (李顯) (r. 684, 705–10) of Táng (唐) (Capital: Cháng'ān, 長安)

¹⁰⁶Only the year in which these events occurred is given: “The **Inaugural Year of Tiáolù**” (調露元年) (Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 221 xià, 歐陽修 宋祁 等撰《新唐書·卷二百二十一·列傳第一百四十六·西域·波斯》). On 15 July 679, the Fourth Year of Yífēng was changed to the Inaugural Year of Tiáolù (“六月辛亥，制：‘大赦天下，改儀鳳四年為調露元年’” (Liú Xù, *Jiù Táng shū*, juàn 5, 劉昫 撰《舊唐書·卷五·本紀第五·高宗下》)). Officially, this meant that thenceforth the entire year was retroactively regarded as the Inaugural Year of Tiáolù, and the *Xīn Táng shū* follows this in the “Basic Annals” (see Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 3, 歐陽修 宋祁 等撰《新唐書·卷三·本紀第三·高宗·調露元年》). However, if the record of these events was from a source not retroactively so changed, 15 July 679 would be the start of the timespan.

¹⁰⁷Alternative translation in lieu of “to **support** the **restoration** [of him]”: “[they] **were going to restore** [him].”

The early part of sometime between 1 October 707 and 1 July 710¹⁰⁸

In the **beginning** of the **Jǐnglóng** [era], [Narseh] **again came to court**, and was **appointed General of the Left Awe-Inspiring Guard**. [He] became **ill and died**. [His] **western units alone exist**.

景龍初·復來朝·授左威衛將軍·病死·西部獨存。

¹⁰⁸Only the approximate time in which this event occurred is given: “In the **beginning** of the **Jǐnglóng** [era]” (景龍初) (Ōuyáng Xiū and Sòng Qí, *Xīn Táng shū*, juàn 221 xià, 歐陽修 宋祁等撰《新唐書·卷二百二十一·列傳第一百四十六下·西域·波斯》). The *Jiù Táng shū* gives a more precise time (see corresponding account).